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EDITORS' TABLE.

EDITORS: A. S. PACKARD AND E. D. COPE.

— In our issue of June of last year we referred to certain conditions of membership of the National Academy of Sciences in the following terms: "In the interval between the annual meetings of 1884 and '85 two members of a committee appointed to investigate a question affecting one of the bureaus of which they themselves are employees, were requested to resign from the committee by the chief of the bureau in question. This was in obedience to a rule that a department of the Government can not be criticized by its subordinates. It requires no argument to show that if this rule be carried out with reference to the Academy of Sciences, its usefulness as an independent body is at an end. There is also another danger which flows directly from the same or a similar attitude on the part of heads of bureaus. These gentlemen by filling up the academy with their employees can obtain practical control of its decisions. This would be immensely convenient to them under various circumstances, but it would introduce an element of corruption into the academy from which it has been hitherto happily free, and which would deprive it of the respect and confidence of the country."

In the case first cited the bureau's action would indicate an apprehension of hostile criticism, perhaps judging from the characters of its employees who had been appointed to investigate. In the latter case reference was made to a case where the bureau concerned did not ask its employees to resign, since it evidently did not fear any adverse report as a result of their investigation. In this case some of the members of the committee appointed by the president of the academy to coöperate with the committee of Congress in the investigation of the scientific bureaus, were employed by some of the bureaus at high salaries. There are a good many men who, under such circumstances, would be unable to perceive any necessity for changes in the administration of their bureaus.

The position of the academy in relation to these matters although at present unavoidable, is, to say the least of it, unfortunate. And the situation of its members is reduced to utter helplessness in consideration of the manner in which committees are appointed and are permitted to report. That is, they are appointed in the interval of the academy's meetings by the president alone, and make their reports without the supervision or criticism of the

academy, which only hears of them at the next meeting as a matter of history! The academy is thus made responsible for any report that a committee of paid employees of a department may choose to make respecting that bureau. The situation is such that no member of the academy can wish it to continue. The reflections which the world can justly make on its position ought not to be possible.

As a remedy for this fundamental evil, we propose the following changes in the constitution of the academy:

1. Not more than one-half of the members of the National Academy shall be paid employees of the Government.

2. The president of the academy shall be selected from those members who are not paid employees of the Government.

3. Committees selected to report on the efficiency of a Government bureau, shall not embrace any employees of that bureau.

4. The committees shall be selected by the president and council, which shall also approve the reports of committees before they are sent to Congress.

5. The members of the council who are not such *ex officio*, shall be selected from the different classes of the academy as follows: One from the anthropological class; two from the biological; two from the physical; and one from the applied class.

6. For convenience of reference and selection, the membership of the academy shall be divided into four classes as follows: Anthropology, embracing philosophy, pure mathematics and anthropology in the limited sense; Biology, including the biological sciences and psychology; Physics, including astronomy, physics, chemistry and geology, without palæontology; and Applied science. The proportion of membership of each should be .15 p. c., .35 p. c., .35 p. c., and .15 p. c.

7. In order that the members of the academy shall be more or less independent of Government places, they should be salaried; \$1000 per annum for members; \$1500 for members of the council, and \$5000 for the president.—C.

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RECENT LITERATURE.

THE ANNALS OF THE CAKCHIQUELS.¹—The Cakchiquel tribe of Indians forms one of the more interesting portions of the Maya stock of Central America; their territory extends at present from Lake Atitlan, Southern Guatemala, to the east and thence to the south down to the Pacific. The ruins of their former center and

¹ *The Annals of the Cakchiquels*. The original text, with a translation, notes and introduction. By DANIEL G. BRINTON, M.D. Philadelphia, 1885, 8vo, vi and 234 pages. (Forms No. 6 of the editor's Library of Aboriginal Literature.)